

The Scala Santa



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The **Scala Sancta** (English: Holy Stairs, Italian: *Scala Santa*) are, according to the Catholic tradition, the steps that led up to the praetorium of Pontius Pilate in Jerusalem, which Jesus Christ stood on during his Passion on his way to trial. The stairs were, reputedly, brought to Rome by St. Helena in the 4th century. For centuries, the Scala Santa has attracted Christian pilgrims who wished to honour the Passion of Jesus.

It consists of twenty-eight white marble steps, now encased by wooden steps, located in a building which incorporates part of the old Lateran Palace, located opposite the Basilica of Saint John Lateran. They are located next to a church which was built on ground brought from Mount Calvary. The stairs lead to the *Sancta Sanctorum* (English: Holy of Holies), the personal chapel of the early Popes in the Lateran palace, known as the chapel of St. Lawrence. The building belongs to the properties of the Holy See.

The Scala Sancta is encased in protective wood, and flanked by four other stairs, two on each side, for common use, since the Holy Stairs may only be ascended on the knees, a devotion much in favor with pilgrims and the faithful, especially on Fridays and in Lent.

Several imitations of the Scala Sancta have been erected in various places such as in Lourdes.

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The Scala Santa Devotion

Short History of this devotion

The original Scala Santa, also known as “Holy Stairway” is the staircase which Jesus ascended during His Passion while proceeding to Pilate’s pretorium. By the Saviour’s footsteps, that staircase which is still in existence today, was sanctified. It continues to be venerated in Rome, in the Basilica of St. John Lateran.

During the last century, it became the custom in many parts of the Catholic Church to erect staircases similar to the Scala Santa in Rome. The first Scala Santa to be built in America in 1891 is found at Sainte Anne de Beaupré, Québec, Canada. Like those of Rome, the Stairs, consisting of 29 steps, are inside, starting on the second floor.

On November 13, 1893, Pope Leo XIII granted that the faithful who ascend the steps of the Scala Santa on their knees, with a contrite heart, praying and meditating on Our Lord’s Passion, may gain an indulgence of three hundred days for each step. This indulgence is applicable towards the souls in Purgatory.

While no special prayer is obligatory, as a convenience to pilgrims,

a short prayer is given here for each of the 28 steps. These short prayers are worthy of veneration, because they were composed and published in Rome for the use of pilgrims to the original Scala Santa.

Preparatory Prayer

O merciful Jesus! For the salvation of mankind, You did submit to the suffering of the scourging and crowning with thorns; You did allow Yourself to be dragged by impious hands on these stairs to be led before Pilate. I desire to venerate with deep respect the bloodstained traces of Your Divine feet, and I humbly beg You, by the merits of Your Passion, to grant, that I may one day ascend to the Throne of Glory, where You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Ghost forever and ever. Amen.

Prayer for each of the 28 steps

A Hail Mary and an invocation to your Patron Saint may be added to each step.

1 st Step.

O My Jesus! By the anguish of heart Thou didst experience, on separating from Thy most holy mother, to go to Thy death, have mercy on me!

2 nd Step.

O My Jesus! By the confusion Thou didst feel and that caused Thee to sweat blood in the Garden of Olives, have mercy on me!

3 rd Step.

O My Jesus! By the intense grief that filled Thy heart on seeing Thyself betrayed by the perfidious Judas, have mercy on me!

4 th Step.

O My Jesus! By the confusion Thou didst feel, when led as a malefactor through the streets of Jerusalem, have mercy on me!

5 th Step.

O My Jesus! By the sweetness Thou didst show, when brought before the tribunal and struck in the face, have mercy on me!

6 th Step.

O My Jesus! By the patience Thou didst exhibit amid the outrages and mockeries, of which Thou wert the object throughout the night preceding

Thy death, have mercy on me!

7 th Step.

O My Jesus! By the cruel insult Thou didst endure, when dragged many times on the Sacred Stairs, have mercy on me!

8 th Step.

O My Jesus! By the silence Thou didst observe in the presence of those who bore false witness against Thee, and of the iniquitous Pilate who unjustly condemned Thee, have mercy on me!

9 th Step.

O My Jesus! By the humiliation to which Thou didst subject Thyself amidst the derision of Herod and his court, have mercy on me!

10 th Step.

O My Jesus! By the shame Thou didst feel on being stripped of Thy garments and tied to the pillar to be scourged, have mercy on me!

11 th Step.

O My Jesus! By the pain Thou didst suffer on being scourged, when Thy body was all covered with wounds and bruises, have mercy on me!

12 th Step.

O My Jesus! By the torture of the sharp thorns, wherewith Thy adorable head was pierced, have mercy on me!

13 th Step.

O My Jesus! By the patience Thou didst exhibit when, clothed with purple rags and with a reed in Thy hand, Thou wert derided and treated as a mocking, have mercy on me!

14 th Step.

O My Jesus! By the affliction Thou didst feel when Thou didst hear the people cry out against Thee, and clamor for Thy death, have mercy on me!

15 th Step.

O My Jesus! By the humiliation to which Thou wert subject, on being compared with Barabbas, and on seeing that criminal preferred to Thine adorable person, have mercy on me!

16 th Step.

O My Jesus! By the resignation wherewith Thou didst embrace the Cross, and proceed with it upon the road to Calvary, have mercy on me!

17 th Step.

O My Jesus! By the sorrow Thou didst feel on meeting Thy most holy Mother, and on witnessing the anguish of her heart, have mercy on me!

18 th Step.

O My Jesus! By the excessive weariness that overcame Thee, while bearing the burden of the cross on Thy shoulders, have mercy on me!

19 th Step.

O My Jesus! By the bitterness Thou didst experience, when the gall and vinegar touched Thy lips, have mercy on me!

20 th Step.

O My Jesus! By the agony Thou didst endure, when Thy garments were roughly torn from Thee, have mercy on me!

21 st Step.

O My Jesus! By the pain Thou didst suffer, when fastened with great nails to the cross of Calvary, have mercy on me!

22 nd Step.

O My Jesus! By the infinite charity that moved Thee to forgive Thine executioners and pray to Thy heavenly Father for them, have mercy on me!

23 rd Step.

O My Jesus! By the goodness with which Thou didst give paradise to the penitent thief, and Mary unto John, as his Mother, have mercy on me!

24 th Step.

O My Jesus! By the burning thirst with which Thou wast tortured on the gibbet of the Cross, have mercy on me!

25 th Step.

O My Jesus! By the torment Thou didst suffer, on seeing Thyself abandoned by all, have mercy on me!

26 th Step.

O My Jesus! By the great love for me with which Thy Divine Heart was inflamed, on breathing forth Thy last sigh, have mercy on me!

27 th Step.

O My Jesus! By the boundless kindness Thou didst manifest, in permitting Thy side to be opened with a spear, have mercy on me!

28 th Step.

O My Jesus! By the tender condescension with which Thou didst permit Thy most sacred body to be placed in the arms of Thy mother, and afterwards in the sepulchre, have mercy on me!

